

Rural Strategy Rollout: An Economic Plan for all Hoosiers
By Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman

I grew up in rural Indiana and still consider it home. I know firsthand what there is to love about our small cities and towns—and the challenges they face. It has long been my mission to develop a strategic plan to help rural Indiana prosper and grow.

To answer the needs of our small cities and towns, I initiated the development of the “Rural Indiana Strategy for Excellence: A 2020 Vision for the Indiana Countryside” (RISE 2020). More than 650 Hoosiers helped us create this plan. It is the first of its kind in the nation, and a model for how a broad, inclusive strategy can be achieved.

RISE 2020 provides a framework for success that communities, counties, rural-serving organizations and state government can use to help rural Indiana realize its full potential. Like our energy and agriculture initiatives, our rural strategy is a key part of the statewide economic development plan.

We are quickly putting the RISE 2020 ideas into practice through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). In the coming months OCRA will help rural Indiana through programs to support rural entrepreneurs, build job skills and aid community planning.

OCRA has developed two grant programs to encourage rural entrepreneurs and to foster workforce and education development. Communities can receive up to \$150,000. Funds are available for rural health facilities and youth centers, as well as to improve infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems.

This is an exciting time for rural Indiana. I believe that our communities will reach economic success and become even stronger by working with OCRA. Our small cities and towns will thrive and become even better places for families to call home. Using the framework of RISE 2020, we will work hand-in-hand to make that happen.

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Lt. Governor Becky Skillman serves as the Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development and oversees the Office of Community and Rural Affairs.